



City of Long Beach

Working Together to Serve

Memorandum

Date: January 24, 2017

To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.H.W.*

From: Kelly Colopy, Director of Health and Human Services *KC*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: Donation Meter Feasibility Study in Long Beach

On May 24, 2016, the City Council requested a report on the feasibility of using a parking meter donation program as a means to encourage residents to give with intention and provide an opportunity to supplement resources dedicated to addressing homelessness throughout the City.

To investigate the topic, staff from the Department of Health and Human Services corresponded with representatives of several agencies operating meter donation programs, including:

- Real Change Movement (Pasadena, CA)
- Make Change Count (San Diego, CA)
- Make Change Count (San Luis Obispo, CA)
- Give a Better Way (Denver, CO)

Additional information was gathered from the Downtown Long Beach Associates, the IPS Group, Inc., the Long Beach Department of Public Works, as well as a review of websites, articles, press releases, brochures, and reports.

Meter Donation Programs:

A number of communities, including those identified above, are repurposing parking meters as a means to collect money for homeless services. These "donation meters" provide an alternative giving opportunity for individuals who wish to help those who are experiencing homelessness. Revenue generated by the meters is typically channeled to homeless services or financial assistance to help people move into permanent housing.

There are key similarities between the four meter donation programs investigated.

- Meter donation programs generally cite one or more of the following goals: raising funds to serve persons experiencing homelessness, reducing panhandling, and/or raising community awareness. All of the communities indicated their donation meter programs were most helpful as part of an educational/community awareness campaign.
- The donation programs benefitted from solar-powered smart meters donated by IPS Group, Inc., the City's parking meter vendor. The donated smart meters accept both coins and credit/debit cards, and the donation includes credit card gateway fees, data management services that allow for tracking donation by meter and sending service notifications, training, and shipping. As an existing customer, the City would be eligible

to request IPS donation meters; nonprofit organizations are also eligible to apply. There are costs to consider, such as credit card processing fees, meter housing, additional hardware, installation and maintenance costs, and any decoration costs (e.g., meter wraps, stickers). Some meter donation programs utilize meter sponsorships to defray these costs.

- The meter donation programs all involve multiple stakeholders. Partners have included the respective city and/or county, local United Ways, business improvement districts, schools, and businesses. Some partners participated in the design and implementation processes, others provided support through donations of additional funding and publicity. Some businesses volunteered their services or provided the services at a reduced rate. These meter donation programs illustrate that homelessness is truly a communitywide issue and requires full community engagement to reach a solution.

Real Change Movement – Pasadena, CA:

In 2014, the Flintridge Center and the City of Pasadena, along with their partners (e.g., IPS Group, Inc., Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich, United Way of Greater Los Angeles), launched the Real Change Movement to raise awareness about the issues of homelessness, while generating funds to help make a difference. To date, nine of the meters, wrapped in bright orange, have been installed. However, the Real Change Movement goes far beyond the meters. It's a comprehensive, positive educational campaign that was researched and created by students at the Art Center College of Design. The students purposely designed a bright and bold campaign "that could pass for a hip brand." The campaign includes a wide variety of materials including a website, brochures, power bill stuffers, bus shelters, bumper stickers, elevator door signage, print ads, video and radio public service announcements.

Although initiated by the City of Pasadena, the campaign is administered by the Flintridge Center, a Pasadena-based nonprofit. The agency oversees Real Change Movement operations in Pasadena, including installation, maintenance, and emptying of the meters; recruiting meter sponsors; handling the donations; updating the website and social media; and reporting. The \$1,500 annual meter sponsorships support the program's operations, which allows the donations to be directed to helping people achieve housing stability.

The Pasadena Real Change Movement campaign has raised the most money of the three California programs. A large component of the program's success is the United Way of Greater Los Angeles' pledge to match the donations dollar for dollar, doubling the impact of the program. In 2014-2015, the campaign received \$4,000 in meter donations and \$4,000 from United Way. That \$8,000 helped 20 people obtain permanent housing by providing security deposits, first month's rent, and furniture, assistance that was not readily available from another funding source. The Real Change Movement will donate \$16,000 for 2015-2016.

Additionally, for an annual fee, which is currently \$1,000, the agency licenses the Real Change Movement campaign to other communities that are interested in starting the program. The Flintridge Center provides graphics and marketing materials along with website support and social media coordination. A participating community would be responsible for recruiting

meter sponsors, installing and maintaining the meters, collecting the coins, coordinating local marketing activities, and donating the funds to local nonprofits. In March of 2016, the Real Change Movement campaign expanded to West Palm Beach, Florida.

Make Change Count - San Diego, CA:

The first of the Make Change Count campaign's 24 bright red donation meters were installed in 2012. Since that time, the campaign has raised over \$10,000. The City of San Diego promotes the campaign but the Downtown San Diego Partnership's Clean & Safe Team is the driving force behind the program. Clean & Safe team members oversee installation, maintenance, coin collection, and outreach for new meter locations. Although the Make Change Count campaign in San Diego does not currently utilize meter sponsorships, additional donations and support have come from local community partners including Cox Communication, IPS Group, Inc., and Underground Elephant. The donated funds have supported the Partnership's family reunification program, hygiene kits, and items to assist in job interview preparation.

Make Change Count - San Luis Obispo, CA:

The Make Change Count campaign is a partnership between the City of San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo Downtown Association, and United Way of San Luis Obispo County. These founding members of the Directed Giving Campaign Committee, which meet regularly, conducted a feasibility study and implemented the campaign. The City primarily oversees the meter maintenance, while the San Luis Obispo Downtown Association has managed marketing and sponsorships. The United Way of San Luis Obispo County serves as the fiscal agent for the Make Change Count campaign. It receives 5-10 percent of campaign donations as an "administrative fee," which is supports its 2-1-1 information and referral program.

Funded by a grant from the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors along with one-time funds from the Police Department's operating budget, the initial two-year pilot program began in April 2014 and continues to operate. Between sponsorships and donations, the seven installed donation meters have brought in \$13,000. However, this amount does not include costs such as credit card fees and the aforementioned United Way of San Luis Obispo County's "administrative fee." Program proceeds have been donated to support the Prado Day Center, which provides services and a safe place for persons experiencing homelessness.

Give a Better Way - Denver, CO:

Give a Better Way, the most established of the four programs, has been operated by Denver's Road Home and partners such as the Downtown Denver Partnership for nearly a decade. The program has evolved since its establishment in 2007. The program began with old coin-operated parking meters that had been refurbished, painted red, and redesigned. In 2013, most of the parking meters were replaced with donated light blue smart meters. While the meters initially collected nearly \$40,000 a year, that amount has declined to an average of approximately \$3,000 in annual donations. This decline may be attributed to leadership changes and a decrease in active marketing for the program. Denver also utilizes meter sponsorships, currently \$1,000 a year, which have generated \$30,000 annually. In total, more

than \$230,000 has been raised through the donation meter program. The donations support job training services, meals, and permanent housing.

A text-to-give program was launched with a rebranded campaign in April 2016. Since then, Denver has received \$1,500 in mobile donations. The mobile giving service, provided by MobileCause, is technically free. Denver's Road Home is able to access the service through its relationship with the Mile High United Way, which acts as their fiscal agent for the agency's charitable donations. However, the Mile High United Way does charge a monthly administrative fee.

Denver's Road Home also unveiled four special coin collection receptacles located before the Transportation Security Administration security screening checkpoints at Denver International Airport in 2013. Initiated by Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock, the receptacles have yielded over \$80,000 in donations a year on average. These generous donations have funded the system manager who oversees Denver's coordinated entry.

Summary of Findings:

- Successful programs are operated as collaborations, typically spearheaded by local non-profit or community-based organizations.
- Meter donation programs are most effective as a part of a public awareness campaign.
- While the programs generally raise modest amounts of funding, they provide a valuable opportunity for community engagement and education.
- The proceeds raised by meter donation programs can be used to fund critical and/or innovative services and assistance that are not available in a community through existing funding sources.
- Sponsorships and matching funds help to expand the impact of the meter donation programs.
- A community partnership consisting of engaged stakeholders is critical to the campaign's success.
- Marketing and publicity are key components, and should be thoughtfully incorporated in the implementation plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

As existing campaigns demonstrate, there are a variety of methods to implement a meter donation program or another alternative. Although meter donation programs generally do not generate a significant source of income, they can be a valuable addition to the community's efforts to end homelessness in Long Beach. As a communications campaign, it can bring awareness to the issue and possibly highlight available solutions. Donations can provide much needed supplemental funds for critical and/or innovative services and assistance that help people to achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

Staff recommends a two-year pilot program to determine the effective messaging and identify the efficacy of the approach. Next steps would include:

- Identifying program sponsors.

- Identifying a community-based agency to implement and administer the education and donation program.
- Designing an initiative as a partnership with a cross-sector community taskforce and a local design partner to develop and test new materials or adapt existing program materials for the City of Long Beach, guide placement, and review effectiveness. It is also possible to license the Real Change Movement for the City of Long Beach.
- Incorporate the program into broader initiatives to support homeless efforts such as the Mayor's Fund for the Homeless to leverage a common message and resources.

City staff will initiate the work of identifying a community-based organization to implement the program and additional program sponsors. Staff will identify funding for costs associated with the program, if needed, through the annual budget process.

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